

To: All Commissioned Officers Returning from Deployment

From: Director, Office of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD)

It has now been only three weeks since Hurricane Katrina devastated much of the central Gulf Coast area resulting in the largest mobilization of U.S. Public Health Officers in its history. Beginning with a "point of the spear" deployment of a 37-member team to the field on August 28, you and your fellow officers have demonstrated an uncompromising commitment to duty and willingness to serve your fellow Americans. Many of you cancelled leave and travel in order to respond to this crisis and have served with distinction in extremely difficult circumstances.

I'm sure that you have found this to be both an extremely rewarding and an extremely humbling experience. Disaster has brought out the best in many people, and none of you will be untouched by your experience. Some of you may find that stress which you experienced in the field does not necessarily go away once you return from deployment. Some may find it hard to readjusting to the normal routines of the home and office after being involved in such an important response effort. This is very normal. You've been taking care of others for the last few weeks and now it's important to take care of yourself both physically and emotionally. In support of this effort, the Office of the Surgeon General, in collaboration with other HHS agencies, is implementing two new services as part of the OFRD. The first is an officer call line to allow you the opportunity to talk about your experiences in the field and after you return with other officers who have recently returned from the field. The second service is one-on-one consults to officers who feel they just need to unload. Both of these services are confidential.

The officer call line will be held on **Mondays at 1400 EST, Wednesdays at 1200 EST, and Fridays at 1500 EST for at least the next 3 weeks.** Each call will have up to 50 lines available, so if you can't get in on a call, you should try again on the next scheduled call. The number is **877-798-6354 and the code is 129733.**

For those officers who would like to talk confidentially, one-on-one with someone about your experiences, please feel free to contact any of the following consultants.

CAPT Pete Delany
240-276-1245
Peter.delany@samhsa.hhs.gov

CDR Jon Perez
240-506-7492
Jperez@hqe.ihs.gov

LCDR Betty Hastings
301-443-1043
Bhasting@na.ihs.gov

CAPT Armen Thoumaian
410-786-6672
Armen.thoumaian@cms.hhs.gov

As VADM Carmona has said, PHS officers have been, and will continue to be, key elements in this response, which will likely last weeks or months into the future. The Office of the Surgeon General is coordinating this service as a way of continuing to support you both in the field and upon return over the coming weeks and months. If you have any suggestions for improving our support services, please contact CAPT Pete Delany at Peter.delany@samhsa.hhs.gov or (240-276-1245).

Let me take this opportunity to again thank you for your dedication and your commitment to the mission of the U.S. Public Health Service Commissioned Corps - Protecting, promoting and advancing the health and safety of our nation. You can be proud of what you have accomplished over the past weeks in meeting this noble mission. I know I'm proud of you.

RADM John Babb
Assistant Surgeon General